

**College Park Neighborhood Stabilization and Quality of Life Work Group**  
**Homeownership Task Force – List of Potential Strategies**

April 12, 2013

**Goal:** Increase the number and percent of owner-occupied houses in College Park, creating a stable, low-turnover resident population.

**Target Population:** While many of these strategies are focused on the University of Maryland, many of them could also be applicable to staff of other large employers in the area, including the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC), NASA-Goddard, and others.

1. **Forgivable home purchasing loan program.** The University of Maryland and other employers could provide forgivable loans to encourage their staff to purchase homes and live in the city of College Park. Unlike grant programs, forgivable loan programs do not have to be considered as taxable income and therefore may be more attractive. Other colleges and universities offer similar programs in cities like Detroit and Philadelphia. (Ref: UMCP Faculty/Staff Housing Market Analysis, January 2013)
2. **Mortgage insurance program.** The University of Maryland can provide incentives to faculty and staff by offering a mortgage insurance program in which the University backs the mortgages of staff and/or faculty that choose to live in College Park. These programs require lower down payments and make home ownership available to more people with varying income levels. There are several other programs on which this can be modeled.
3. **Homeownership grants.** The city currently has a “New Neighbor Homeownership Grant Program” that provides grants to encourage homeowners to purchase homes in College Park; the program is specifically focused on purchases of a previously rented home and foreclosed or short sale properties, but this restriction does not apply to purchasers who are a police officer, career firefighter, or EMT (who can use the grant to support any College Park home purchase). The College Park City-University Partnership (CPCUP) previously had a similar program called the “Work & Live College Park” program. The University could establish a similar program as a service and incentive for its faculty and staff. The City could also expand its current program by increasing the funding level.
4. **Forgivable home improvement loans.** Forgivable loans to support home improvements could help to retain homeowners who already own homes in College Park but want to upgrade their homes. Existing programs in other places sometimes restrict such loans just to façade renovations, while others allow interior repairs, exterior repairs, or to conversion of a property from a multi-family to a single-family residence. (Source: UMCP Faculty/Staff Housing Market Analysis, January 2013)

5. **Housing resource center.** This strategy would focus on helping prospective homeowners and renters find housing that matches their needs. The UMCP Faculty/Staff Housing Market Analysis (January 2013) noted that “UM already has a good start on developing a housing resource center with the creation of the Faculty Affairs relocation website. UM may want to consider expanding its services beyond incoming faculty and serve other incoming and existing employees as well. A housing resource center is a relatively low-cost option that can serve a wide variety of populations.”
6. **Ground lease for-sale development program.** “Homes would be sold under a long-term ground lease arrangement. This means that a buyer would purchase the home, but not the land, which the buyer would lease from UM or a UM-affiliated entity. The ground lease program enhances affordability by removing the cost of the land from the purchase price. This lower price is partially offset with ground rent. The ground lease also allows UM to maintain affordability by indexing the maximum resale price of the home based on an inflationary index. Challenges to this program include identifying low- or no-cost land required for the program to operate below-market, especially in College Park.” (UMCP Faculty/Staff Housing Market Analysis, January 2013)
7. **Reduce or eliminate school facilities surcharge exemption for student housing.** This exemption, created by state legislation, provides an incentive for developers to focus just on student housing – and conversely, a disincentive to build other housing types that do not receive this exemption. Although the previous student housing shortage made this incentive attractive in the past, now that substantial additional student housing has been constructed, it may be time to either narrow the “waiver zone” or eliminate it in order to encourage developers to consider other types of housing developments that meet unmet housing needs in College Park (i.e. rentals for non-students, condominiums, etc.).
8. **Aging-in-place programs.** These programs may contribute to preventing the conversion of owner-occupied housing to rental properties if they help home-owners stay in their houses longer.
9. **Marketing materials to encourage potential residents to live in College Park.** University, staff, and other potential residents may not be aware of all of the advantages and amenities associated with living in College Park, and may sometimes have misperceptions about quality of life issues in College Park, such as comparative crime rates, quality of schools, etc. Developing and disseminating marketing materials may help to attract prospective homeowners. University faculty and staff are one obvious audience for such marketing efforts but other large employers in the area should also be considered.
10. **Institute a waiting period before investors can bid on a home.** When a home goes up for sale, the city might require an extended waiting period before investors can bid on the home, giving potential owner-occupants more time to make a bid and purchase the house.

11. **Offer assistance to sellers to help target prospective owner-occupants.** Provide resources or educational materials to help sellers target potential owner-occupants. These materials could help sellers prepare their house to appeal to potential homeowners, through repairs, staging and improving “curb appeal.”
12. **Improve K-12 education options for College Park residents.** The College Park Academy could be a valuable tool for attracting University faculty and staff to live in College Park if some seats were set aside for College Park residents. Converting this charter school to a hybrid of neighborhood school as well as choice school would allow the school to continue to serve the county as a whole while also meeting the particular needs of College Park to increase home ownership. In addition, the University’s collaborative involvement in other College Park schools (such as Paint Branch Elementary) should be expanded in order to strengthen these schools.
13. **Resident discount for or access to University amenities.** This includes activities such as the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center and athletic events. This might also include lifelong learning programs for city residents, use of the library, and recreational facilities.
14. **Summer camp scholarships.** Continue, and possibly expand, the recently started summer camp scholarship program for city residents attending camps at the University.